

E 297  
.R32  
Copy 1

# HISTORICAL ADDRESS

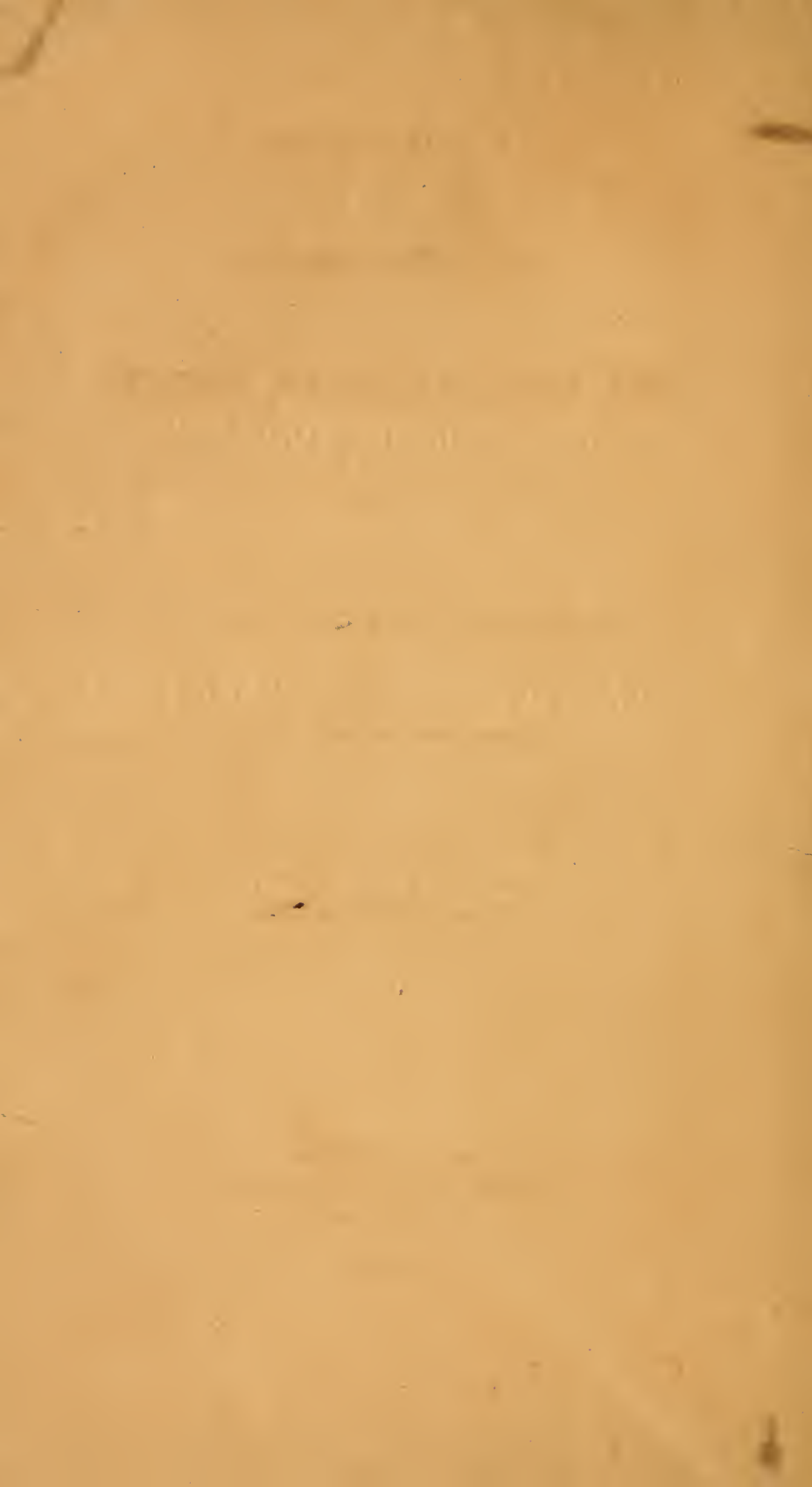
AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

BY

WILLIAM B. REED.

1838.



April 7 1870

ADDRESS  
DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE PHILOMATHEAN SOCIETY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1st, A. D. 1838,

BY  
WILLIAM B. REED.

radford

Philadelphia:

PRINTED BY T. K. & P. G. COLLINS,

No. 1 LODGE ALLEY.

1838.

E 297

R32

45667

'04

THE LIBRARY  
OF CONGRESS

25 Jan 1904 W.O.W.

FRIDAY EVENING, *Nov. 2, 1838.*

SIR,

The Philomathean Society has conferred upon us the agreeable duty of communicating to you the following extract from the minutes of a meeting held on Friday evening, Nov 2d.

*Resolved*, "That the thanks of this Society be presented to William B. Reed, Esq., for the elegant and appropriate address delivered before us on Thursday evening, Nov. 1st, and that a copy be requested for publication."

Yours, very respectfully,

I. W. BIDDLE,

E. C. WATMOUGH,

E. A. THOURON,

HENRY E. MONTGOMERY,

*Committee.*

TO WILLIAM B. REED, Esq.

---

PHILADELPHIA, *Nov. 3, 1838.*

GENTLEMEN,

I place at your disposal a copy of the address delivered before the Society. It is rather an historical essay than an oration, but I trust not less acceptable to you on that account. How successful my experiment has been it is not for me to say. I wished to call your attention to the unexplored sources of our own history, and if any portion of the intelligent audience I had the honor of addressing, learned any thing new connected with that history, the highest aim I had is attained.

I am, with great regard,

Your friend and fellow member,

WILLIAM B. REED.

TO MESSRS. BIDDLE, WATMOUGH,

THOURON, and MONTGOMERY,

*Committee.*



## ADDRESS.

---

RELINQUISHING the path which my predecessors have pursued, I invite your attention to a subject that commends itself by its intrinsic interest, its patriotic associations, its moral and political value. It is a theme worthy of more minute illustration than can now be given to it : the origin of our Revolutionary Union—the recorded and traditionary history of the acts and influences that led to the convocation of the first Continental Congress, which met in Philadelphia in the month of September, 1774.

I do not pause to vindicate this choice. I am addressing an *American* literary association. Should what I have to say this evening fail to excite the interest which less practical themes in abler hands might produce, to me at least it will not be a matter of surprise. Neglected history has few charms. But should any word of mine give a new impulse to the patriotism of those who hear me ; should any one of you, young gentlemen, in following me through details of vast and

abiding interest to the cause of civil liberty and social right, find that he has learned a new fact or secured a clue to some new inquiry connected with the history of his country; should what may now be novelties to many of you tend hereafter to give rational vigour to the principle of loyalty in your bosoms, my aim will be attained, and all the reward that I promise myself secured. Greater will be that reward if the course I venture to indicate be hereafter followed, and the anniversary addresses delivered in these halls be made historical expositions, to which the student may have recourse as valuable repositories of facts rescued from the loose grasp of uncertain tradition or the mouldy pages of neglected history.

None know but those who have critically examined it, how rich are the spoils of time which our history contains. Few can realise its true, though unappreciated value—how much it is neglected and how often prostituted. Yes, prostituted—for he prostitutes the classic history of this soil who uses it for the poor purposes of contemporary strife, or explores its treasures merely to find new phrases of adulation to some leader whom accident or faction may have raised to temporary distinction. The jewels of the Revolution suit not the attire of the day. The armour of our age of chivalry would sink a modern ‘hero’ in the dust. The old Puritan wanderer



who travelled through Scotland to visit the graves of the Cameronian sufferers, was the incarnation of a noble sentiment—a sentiment which, where it ripens into a rule of conduct, makes the pride of ancestry a virtue. Time with him had not weakened the memory or tradition of “a broken covenant and a persecuted kirk,” and it was his enthusiasm to travel from churchyard to churchyard, seeking no other recompense than the consciousness that he had arrested the hand of decay, and preserved, till some other enthusiast might appear to renew them, the epitaphs of patriotism and valour.

Such a feeling of veneration, such pride of lineage I invoke for the study of our American memorials. The invocation will not be in vain.

The pride of Revolutionary ancestry—the sense that the blood which flows in his veins is the blood of a patriot of the Revolution, is an heritage that no American should disdain. It is more than a privilege; it is “a sonorous memento” of fidelity to the cause of republican institutions and popular sovereignty; of the citizen’s loyalty to the State; of hereditary obligation to patriotic duty and unwavering confidence in popular capacity.

Such an impulse, if encouraged, may divert many an active mind from unprofitable pursuits, and arouse many a sluggish mind to action. If one tithe of the misdirected talent that now runs to waste through

the columns of the periodical press were applied to the minute and philosophic illustration of different periods of our annals, how vast a fund might be accumulated for the use of the historian hereafter. If the undisciplined fancy that seeks indulgence in writing bad tragedies and silly novels could be taught to turn to this worthier theme, how masculine and characteristic might our literature be made. If, instead of the literary confectionary with which the public mind is poisoned, American books on American topics, written in an American spirit, could find publishers and patrons—if the press were made to realise that its stereotyped praises might be better used than in dignifying with the name of literature the effusions, whether in poetry or prose, of presumptuous sciolists and underbred travellers—gossips abroad and coxcombs every where;—if, finally, the bounty of the rich were occasionally to find an object in the endowment of institutes or professorships where American history could be taught accurately and elaborately, might we not hope to see a different result? Would we not be sure to find the young men of the Republic, not as they now too often are, doubting, from sheer ignorance, the success of our experiment of self government, but confident in popular capacity; familiar, not with the merits of foreign politics alone and imbued with their spirit, but acquainted thoroughly with the theory of our own

domestic institutions, learned from our own domestic history?

I have known young Americans with sympathies so ludicrously misdirected that they kept a careful record of election returns after a dissolution of parliament, and exulted as for a domestic political triumph, on the defeat of some obscure candidate in some obscure borough in Great Britain. Yet these same individuals would not blush to confess their ignorance of what the "Writs of Assistance" were at the outbreak of the Revolution, or to boast their better acquaintance with the merits of parliamentary reform than those of parliamentary taxation. I have known others who knew little else of the Revolution than its stores of gossip and scandal. If in any loyalist chronicle or tory pamphlet, a slanderous aspersion on a patriot of the Revolution be detected, it is adduced as proof of destitution of public virtue in a cause that boasts so much. If, in the heat of political discussion during those times, suspicions of patriotism or public virtue were honestly or dishonestly expressed, suspicions and charges which time has dissipated, and which, with all the impurities of mortality, should be buried in the graves of their authors, these miserable resurrectionists of slander employ their energies in digging up what should no more be seen or thought of, and are not

ashamed to argue thence against the theory of our free institutions. This is the prostitution of our history.

Let no one suppose that the study of our History is easy, or that the materials are ready to the student's hand. Far from it. Short as is the interval from our own days to those of the Revolution it is scarcely conceivable with how little of its detail we are familiar. The elementary works that have been published are not only superficial, but generally inaccurate. Memoirs, in themselves most valuable, are few in number. The fact that the best history of the colonies is by a Scotchman, and of the Revolution, by an Italian, (the latter having from necessity become a school book,) neither of whom had ever seen the country he describes, shows how poor is his reliance who depends for a precise knowledge of our history on what has been already published.\* If any one will take a given era, or chapter in our annals, such, for instance, as the one I propose cursorily to illustrate, he will feel the difficulty to which I allude. In our elementary works, the Congress of 1774, the Parent of the Confederation and the Constitution, is disposed of in a single page of vague panegyric; and, perhaps, the

---

\* M. Botta, and Mr. Grahame. The historical work of Mr. Grahame, recently revised and enlarged, is not as well known in this country as it should be. Not only is it a work of great research and accuracy, but it is written in a style and with a spirit that ought to make it popular. It is decidedly the best work on our colonial history.

sum of it all is the eulogy of the elder Pitt, "that its acts would have done honour to Greece and Rome in their best days." In order to understand such subjects properly, the treasures of hidden manuscripts must be explored; original journals and records perused; dates and traditional legends collated; the newspapers of the day cautiously scrutinised—all this and much more the student of our history has to do before he can pretend to discover the hidden truth of times so little distant. Without claiming to have investigated the subject as thoroughly as it should be; in fact, content with pointing out a path for others to pursue, and suggesting to your minds a subject worthy of elaborate illustration, I now recur to the text I have selected.

It would be out of place here to speculate on the varied causes which led to the rupture between Great Britain and her colonies. Those which political philosophy has indicated are familiar to you. The ultimate causes of the convocation of the first deliberative body of the *United Colonies* are all that I shall notice here. One word, however, as to the combination of causes more remote. To my mind the best solution of that great result is simply this—that the time had come, and that the period was reached, when, by a law of political nature, the child was to leave the parent's tutelage and become its own master. Other causes, or combinations of causes,

will be inadequate when we bear in mind that, in point of fact, at the time of the rupture, the load of actual grievance was little heavier than it had been for a long series of years before. I speak now not so much of the violation of constitutional rights as of the burthen of substantial and injurious oppression. The Colonies had unquestioned constitutional rights. These rights were coincident with their birth, and so far were they from being first violated when complaint was made, the most flagrant violation of them was, from long acquiescence, rarely mentioned. The Navigation Acts, more than a century old when the Revolution began, by which the trade of the Colonies with other countries than Great Britain was prohibited, were an indefensible infringement of colonial rights. They too involved an actual grievance quite as hard to bear as any which were afterwards imposed. The act imposing a Stamp Tax was passed in 1765. It was repealed in 1766 when the Declaratory Act was passed, asserting the right of Parliament to impose taxes on the Colonies. True to their awakened sense of colonial right, the patriots resisted the Stamp Act, and murmured at the Declaratory Act. In no part of the Colonies was the discontent stronger than in Pennsylvania; yet, as the historical student well knows, by the twentieth section of the Charter to William Penn, there



was an express reservation of a Parliamentary right of taxation.\*

The excitement produced by the Stamp Act having in great measure subsided, it was called into new action by the Revenue Bill of 1768. This imposed a duty on certain articles imported into the Colonies, and was designed to avoid the objection to the Stamp Act as a measure of internal taxation. It is not easy to distinguish in point of constitutionality between such an Act as this and the Navigation Acts of Charles 2d, for, if Government could constitutionally prohibit all commercial intercourse except with the mother country, might it not by parity of reasoning derive a tribute from that very trade or any branch of it? As finally modified, the Revenue Bill was far less oppressive than the Navigation Acts. Indeed it involved an exemption from previous imposition; for, through the agency of the East India

---

\* "And further, our pleasure is and by these presents, for us, our heirs and successors, we do covenant and grant to, and with the said William Penn, his heirs and assigns, that we, our heirs and successors, shall at no time hereafter, set, or make, or cause to be set, any imposition, custom, or other taxation, rate or contribution whatsoever, in and upon the dwellers of the aforesaid province, for their lands, tenements, goods or chattels, or in and upon any goods or merchandise within the said province, or to be laden or unladen within the ports or harbours of the said province unless the same be with the consent of the proprietary, or chief governor and assembly, *or by Act of Parliament in England.*"

The 14th Section of the Charter recognised the validity and obligation of the Laws of Trade and Navigation.

Company, tea was to be imported into the Colonies at a less price than it had been before the obnoxious act was passed. Prior to the act, the foreign duty in Great Britain was one shilling per pound. By the act this duty was removed by drawback on tea destined for America, and in place of it a duty of 3*d.* a pound was substituted, payable in the Colonies.

If then, at the beginning of the year 1774, the Colonies had no new oppression to complain of, may we not look elsewhere for causes for the state of things which then existed? They may, I repeat, be summed up in this, that the maturity of provincial growth was reached, the fulness of time was come; and it follows that, had the policy of the British Government, which led first to discontent, been wholly abandoned, the result would scarcely have been different. Any one who will examine the pamphlets and other publications of the colonial press (in the interval) from 1764 to 1773, will be satisfied that the day for palliatives was passed, and that disease past remedy was wasting Imperial authority on this side of the Atlantic.

In saying this, let me not for a moment be understood as questioning the sincerity of the murmurs which burst from colonial America, prior to this period. To say that there was little actual grievance, few of those modes of oppression which invade the pocket, or restrain the person



of the citizen, is to pay a just tribute to the quick sense of abstract right, which saw with instinctive precision each approach of danger. The spirit of liberty, which hovered over the Pilgrims to Plymouth, spread her wings over the continent. The community of colonial America had for a century been restless, it scarcely knew why or under what influence, and when, after the peace of 1763, the gratitude of the mother country for the assistance of the Colonies during a long and bloody war, exhibited itself in the form of new and wanton impositions on trade, the period of submission was reached. From that time forward, the progress of discontent was never for a moment stayed. It would be curious to trace the varied forms it assumed. Colonial representation in Parliament was an early suggestion, which, however, was soon abandoned. In an original and unpublished letter, in my possession, of as early a date as 1764, the following language is held by one who, twelve years afterwards, signed the Declaration of Independence. "I am greatly concerned that the Colonies are likely to have such incumbrances laid upon them. I believe they must each of them send one or two of their most ingenious fellows, and enable them to get into the House of Commons, and maintain them there till they can maintain themselves, or else we shall be fleeced to some purpose. This must be the work of time. After the mother coun-

try shall have added one oppressive measure to another, and after our colleges shall have thrown into the lower Houses of Assembly, men of more foresight and understanding than they now can boast of, perhaps the time may come; you who are ten years younger than I am, will stand a fairer chance of seeing and being concerned in it than I shall.”\* The idea of such a representation, similar it would seem to that which Canada recently had in Parliament, or, indeed, any representation, on any basis, was soon abandoned, and accordingly we find in one of the Fairfax Resolutions, and the address of the Congress to the Colonies, in 1774, a distinct repudiation of any such mode of redress as idle and impracticable.

The fever of the blood never seemed to remit, and the symptoms of the certain result, however concealed then, cannot now be mistaken. In October, 1771, Samuel Adams wrote to Authur Lee then in England, “Many are alarmed, but are of different sentiments with regard to the next step to be taken. Some, indeed, think that every step has been taken but *one*. The *ultima ratio* would require prudence, unanimity, fortitude——This is the general appearance of things here, while the people

---

\* This is an extract from a letter from Richard Stockton, of New Jersey, to a young friend then studying law in the Temple, who also acted a distinguished part in the drama of the Revolution.

are anxiously looking for some happy event on your side of the water. For my own part, I confess, I have no great expectation thence. I have long been of opinion that America herself, under God, must work out her own salvation." As early as October, 1770, John Dickinson wrote to Mr. Lee, "After what has taken place I scarcely know how to write of my unfortunate countrymen. Your observations are extremely just. We must owe our political salvation to the body of the people. No martyred saint ever beheld his butchers with more despairing pity, than I do the whole apparatus of tyranny. But to move great bodies strongly, there must be an appearance of deliberation in one's conduct. I am truly moderate. I wish only for '*placidam sub libertate quietem*,' and I am for attaining the blessing by the most gentle means. My countrymen have been provoked, but not quite enough. Thanks to the excellent spirit of administration, I doubt not but proper measures will be taken to provoke them still more. Some future oppression will render them more attentive to what is offered to them; and the calm friend of freedom, who faithfully watches and calls out on a new danger, will be more regarded than if he endeavours to repeat the alarm, or an attack that is thought to be in a great measure repelled. I do not despair. Our mercenaries have been defeated, our na-

tive troops stand firm. There is a spirit and a strength in the landholders of this continent, sufficient to check the violence of any infamously corrupt ministry, and that the most daring of them may find perhaps sooner than he expects." In April, 1774, before the Boston Port Bill reached America, Samuel Adams made this solemn declaration, the first sentence of which is worthy the pen of Milton. "THE BODY OF THE PEOPLE ARE NOW IN COUNCIL. They are united. They are resolute. And if the British administration and government do not return to the principles of moderation and equity, the evil which they profess to aim at preventing by rigorous measures, will the sooner be brought to pass, viz. the entire separation and Independence of the Colonies."

Thus spoke the ardent and the moderate of those days; and looking to their language, transparent as it is to the strong impulses that agitated their minds, do we err in the belief that causes of greater efficacy were at work, which the patriots themselves did not detect, and that remedies which they supposed might heal the wound, would have been wholly inoperative? The return of government to principles of moderation and equity would have availed little. The repeal of every obnoxious act, from the Peace of Paris, might have delayed but would not have averted the catastrophe.

Speculative wrongs were soon to merge in subjection

to unequivocal and unmitigated despotism. In the latter part of December, 1773, the tea shipped by the East India Company arrived in America. Its fate is well known. At Boston it was destroyed, and at none of the Atlantic ports was it allowed an entry. There was in the conduct of the colonists throughout, a stern dignity—a resolute defiance of metropolitan power, that is worthy all admiration. Nor was it less admirable as involving but in a single instance, where popular endurance was too much tried, any overt act of violence. It is a libel on the Revolution to say that, “it sprang from a Boston riot.” The “Boston riot” was the spasm of an agonised frame, and it is a profanation of history to cite it as authority for the violence of the hour, or the defiance of law, which the demagogues of the day may seek to excite or justify. Boston, in the language of one of her sons, had been so long “galled without and vexed within,” that patience with her had ceased to be a virtue.\*

In the interval that elapsed after the return of the tea ships, and before the news of the decision of Government reached this country, the minds of the colonists were wound up to the most extreme tension. None could tell what form ministerial vengeance would take, or to what

---

\* Josiah Quincy Jun.

extent it would be urged. The quiet of that interval was the boding quiet which precedes the convulsion of nature. The air was still, not a leaf moved, not a sound was heard. The sternest patriot could not disguise his solicitude, the cautious and timid trembled, and were silent. It was like the period of the preceding century described by that beautiful Puritan writer and heroine Mrs. Hutchinson: "The land was then att peace, (it being toward the latter end of the reigne of king James,) if that quietnesse may be called a peace, which was rather like the calme and smooth surface of the sea, whose darke wombe is allready impregnated of a horrid tempest."

The bolts of ministerial vengeance did not slumber long, and in the short space of two months, no less than three special penal statutes were matured and enacted by the Imperial Parliament. They were directed at Boston and Massachusetts. The first was the Port Bill, by which the harbour of Boston was blockaded, its trade suspended, its privileges as a commercial city of the Empire annulled, and its Custom House removed to Marblehead. The next was the act altering the Charter of the province of Massachusetts Bay, so as more effectually to enforce the will of the officers of the crown; and the last and worst, "the Act for the more impartial administration of Justice," by which persons charged with felonies were to be



removed to England for trial. These bills were passed by a steady ministerial majority, and after more or less opposition on the part of those who were known in Parliament as the friends of the Colonies. They filled the new chapter of provocation.

On Tuesday, May 10th, intelligence of the Port Bill reached Boston. On the 12th, by another arrival, it was received in New York, and on the 17th it was first known in Philadelphia. The instant and coincident action of the different communities shows how close was the bond of sympathy by which they were united. There was no pause in the expression of resentment, and at the instant when the beacon was fired at Boston, a light burst from every headland, and showed that there were watchmen who were watching the coming of the common danger from one end of the continent to the other. I shall not intrude on the province of history by narrating here the action of the colonists at the various prominent points, but pass hastily to the remedy which was suggested and adopted.

At Boston redress was proposed in the form of immediate agreements of commercial non-intercourse with Great Britain and the West Indies, and a special agent, Mr. Paul Revere, the father of one of our respected fellow citizens, was sent southward as far as Philadelphia to solicit the concurrent action of the Colonies. And

here I may be allowed to correct an error that has crept into all the histories of the times with respect to the first formal recommendation of the mode of redress which was adopted. I mean the convocation of a General Congress.

Prior to 1774, there had been many suggestions of something like an union of the Colonies through their representatives in Congress. In April, 1773, Samuel Adams said—"Should the correspondence from Virginia produce a Congress and then an assembly of states, it would require the head of a very able minister to speak with so respectable a body. This, perhaps, is a mere fiction in the mind of a political enthusiast; ministers of state are not apt to be disturbed with dreams." In April 1774, Arthur Lee, writing from London, stated as his opinion, "that there ought to be a Congress." These were private suggestions. Such a measure had been adopted with beneficial effect at the time of the Stamp Act, and seemed to be the only one which commended itself alike to the moderate and the zealous. The friend of government could not object when he knew that the alternative was open resistance in the form of obstructions to trade. The patriot could not withhold his approval to a plan which, however productive of short delay, secured concert of action and effective sympathy. Thus acceptable to all when once formally suggested, it



was promptly acceded to, and history has thought the inquiry worth attention, to whom belongs the credit of having at this crisis formally revived the plan. All the elementary writers that I have consulted, as well as the most accurate biographers who have examined the subject, have concurred in assigning the credit of this great measure to our sister city of New York. The careful examination of original papers that I have had occasion to make satisfies me that this is an error, and that the plan of a Congress was not only not first suggested in New York, but was not proposed there at all till the recommendation came from Philadelphia.

To neither community, however, in point of fact, does the merit of the first public suggestion of a Congress belong. On the 17th May, 1774, a town meeting was held at Providence, Rhode Island, called by warrant, at which Samuel Nightingale acted as Moderator, and the following resolutions were adopted:

*“Resolved,* That this town will heartily join with the province of Massachusetts Bay and the other Colonies in such measures as shall be generally agreed on by the Colonies, for the protecting and securing their invaluable rights and privileges, and transmitting the same to the latest posterity.

*“Resolved,* That the deputies of this town be requested to use their influence at the approaching session of the

General Assembly of this Colony, for promoting a Congress, as soon as may be, of the representatives of the General Assemblies of the several Colonies and provinces in North America, for establishing the firmest union and adopting such measures as to them shall appear most effectual to insure that important purpose, and to agree upon proper methods for executing the same."

These resolutions, though prior to the action of New York and Philadelphia, were probably for a time unknown beyond the immediate neighborhood where they originated. The question as to which of the two principal cities of the colonies publicly agitated the proposition of a Congress still remains; and the error of giving, in this matter, New York a precedence to Philadelphia, is not affected by the anterior action of the Town Meeting at Providence.

The first meeting that was held at New York after the receipt of the Port Bill was on the 16th May, when nothing was done beyond the appointment of a committee of fifty to correspond with the Colonies. On Tuesday, 17th, the express arrived from Boston on its way to Philadelphia. On Thursday, 19th, a second meeting was called to ratify the proceedings of the former meeting. At neither of these was there a suggestion made as to a Congress. On Monday, the *twenty-third of May*,

the Committee of Fifty met and adopted the following Resolution :

“Ordered, that Mr. M'Dougall, Mr. Low, Mr. Duane and Mr. Jay be a committee to prepare and report a draft of an answer to the Boston Committee at 8 o'clock P. M., to which hour the Grand Committee then adjourned. ”

At 8 o'clock *the same evening* (23d) the Grand Committee met, and the letter prepared by Mr. Jay recommending a General Congress was reported and adopted. This, says his biographer, was the first formal suggestion of a Congress for the Colonies. At the same meeting it was “Ordered, that the chairman send a copy of this letter to the Committee at Boston, and to the Committee of Correspondence at Philadelphia, *acknowledging the receipt of a copy of their letter* to Boston, and approving the sentiments contained in it.”

But in the interval, what was doing in this, our staid and peaceful city, and what was the letter which the New York gentlemen received from Philadelphia? On the 17th or 18th of May, the Port Bill was published in the papers of Philadelphia, and on that, or the next day, Mr. Revere arrived from Boston. On Friday evening, May 20th, between two and three hundred of the most respectable inhabitants met at the City Tavern, when a Committee

of Correspondence was appointed.\* On the 21st the Committee met and reported a letter to Boston, which was adopted, signed and despatched by Mr. Revere. As I have stated, it is dated two days before the New York committee met, or Mr. Jay's letter was reported, and contains the following passage, conclusive on this question of precedence.

“By what means the truly desirable circumstance of a reconciliation and future harmony with our mother country, on constitutional grounds, may be obtained, is indeed a weighty question. Whether by the method you have suggested of a non-importation and non-exportation agreement, or by a General Congress of Deputies from the different Colonies, clearly to state what we conceive to be our rights, and to make a claim, or petition of them to his majesty, in firm but decent and dutiful terms, so as that we may know by what line to conduct ourselves in future, are now the great points to be determined. The latter we have reason to think would be the most agreeable to the people of the province, and the first step that ought to be taken; the former may be reserved as our last resource should the other fail, which we trust will

---

\* It consisted of John Dickinson, William Smith, Edward Penington, Joseph Fox, John Nixon, John M. Nesbit, Samuel Howell, Thomas Mifflin, Joseph Reed, Thomas Wharton Jun., Benjamin Marshall, Thomas Barclay, George Clymer, Charles Thomson, Jeremiah Warder Jun., John Cox, John Gibson and Thomas Penrose.

not be the case, as many wise and good men in the mother country begin to see the necessity of a good understanding with the Colonies, upon the general plan of liberty as well as commerce."

This letter dated the twenty-first was received and acknowledged at New York on the twenty-third, and on its receipt was the formal suggestion of a Congress made by Mr. Jay in his letter to Boston.

This question of precedence disposed of, it would be interesting, were time allowed me, to note the similarity in many respects, of the movements at New York and Philadelphia, and the difficulties which in each place the friends of liberty had to overcome. A letter of Gouverneur Morris, of that date, has been preserved, in which, in his peculiar manner, and with what I may be permitted to call his habitual sneer at every thing like popular movement, he describes the tumult and disorder which distinguished the meetings of the 17th and 19th May, at New York. The perplexities of the patriots in Philadelphia were scarcely less. I have in my possession a manuscript narrative of the events of that day, left by the late Charles Thomson, who with his friends John Dickinson, Joseph Reed, and Thomas Mifflin, were the principal actors in the opening scene of the great drama. It describes the meeting at the City Tavern, on the 20th May, as composed of various and discordant materials.

There were the proprietary interests, the sons of the principal officers of government, the whigs, all impatient to know what was to be laid before them, what was to be said, what was to be done, all anxious to stimulate or compose the excitement of the time. The narrative thus proceeds: (the writer generally speaking of himself in the third person) "The room, though large, was exceedingly crowded. The letter received from Boston was read, after which Mr. Reed addressed the assembly with temper, moderation, and in pathetic terms. Mifflin spoke next with great warmth and fire. Thomson succeeded, and pressed for an immediate declaration in favour of Boston, and making common cause with her, but being overcome with the heat of the room and fatigue, for he had scarce slept an hour for two nights past, he fainted, and was carried out into an adjoining room. Great clamour was raised against the violence of the measures proposed. Mr. Dickinson then addressed the meeting. In what manner he acquitted himself I cannot say.\* After he had finished the clamour was renewed. Voices were heard in different parts of the room, and all was in

---

\* Mr. Reed, in describing the proceedings, says, "After Mr. Thomson had fainted, he (Mr. R.) supported what he had previously said and sat down, when Mr. Dickinson rose and recommended an address to the Governor to call the Assembly; this being done in a few words he immediately left the meeting and returned home." MS. in my possession.—W. B. R.



confusion. A chairman was called for, to moderate the meeting and regulate debates. Still the confusion continued. As soon as Mr. Thomson recovered, he returned into the room. The tumult and disorder were past description. He had not strength to attempt opposing the gust of passion, or to allay the heat by anything he could say. He therefore simply moved a question that an answer should be returned to the letter from Boston. This was put and carried. He then moved for a Committee to write the answer. This was agreed to, and two lists were immediately made out and handed to the chair. The clamour was then renewed on which list a vote should be taken. At length it was proposed that both lists should be considered as one, and compose the Committee. This was agreed to, and the company broke up in tolerable good humour, both parties thinking they had in part carried their point. At what time Mr. Dickinson left the room I cannot say, as a great many withdrew when the tumult raged. Next day the Committee met, and not only prepared and sent back an answer to Boston, but also forwarded the news to the Southern Colonies, accompanied with letters intimating the necessity of a Congress of Delegates from all the Colonies to devise measures necessary to be taken for the common safety. It was then proposed to call a general meeting of the inhabitants of the city at the State House. This

required great address. The Quakers had an aversion to town meetings, and always opposed them. However it was so managed that they gave their consent, assisted in preparing for this public meeting, and agreed on the persons who should preside and those who should address the inhabitants. The presidents agreed on were Dickinson, Willing and Penington. The speakers were Smith,\* Reed, and Thomson, who were obliged to write down what they intended to say, and submit it to the revision of the presidents. The meeting was held, and it was resolved to make common cause with Boston."

At this crisis, the three Colonies whose action was regarded with most solicitude, were Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. We have seen that, while in New England the first impulse was to resort to extremities, by immediate non-intercourse and separate colonial action, the patriots who there controlled the counsels of discontent, simultaneously with their first expressions of resentment, sent a special messenger to Philadelphia to ascertain the views of their friends here. Almost immediately on the return of that messenger, the proposal of a Congress was cordially approved and Philadelphia fixed as the place of its convention.

The "Ancient Dominion" was prompt in her action.

---

\* The Rev. William Smith, Provost of the College.



Virginia had been well grounded in the rudiments of discontent, and had been taught in the various contests between the Assemblies and the Royal Governors, by how frail a tenure the rights of the Colonial subject would be held if popular vigilance were once lulled to sleep. There were also two elements of agitation in Virginia, which could hardly be said to exist elsewhere. The Church of England here had peculiar privileges that were looked on with an evil eye by the dissenters, and against which, as part and parcel of the appendages of Government, sectarian and political animosity allied their forces. "The Church of England," we are told by Mr. Burke,\* "was formed from its cradle under the nursing care of regular government," and the instant that regular government in Colonial America began to be threatened, it hugged its foster child to its affrighted bosom, and made at once the parent's and the infant's cause the same. The dissenters, especially the Baptists, in Virginia threw themselves at once into the ranks of political opposition, and saw, in the progress and sure result of social disorganisation, the issue of their polemical aspirations. Besides this, there were castes in Virginia. There was an order of spurious aristocracy, and there was a class of men who had not the instinct of submission which belongs

---

\* Speech on Conciliation with America.

to a people used to hereditary nobility. These sturdy murmurers at the pretensions of the "untitled nobility" of Virginia, Patrick Henry represented, and never had the democratic principle a more sincere or conscientious advocate. He was the true tribune of an injured people. He believed "all men to be free and equal." He was a republican in spirit and in truth. With such a leader, it may be supposed how much force was given to the movement in Virginia by the activity of the party identified with what might be called the lower classes. Religious dissent and social restlessness were thus combined to make the atmosphere more explosive.

Let me here mention to you a curious anecdote, which I do not remember to have seen on record, connected with the memorials of the Virginia Orator. Most of you no doubt are familiar with the biography of Patrick Henry, by the late Mr. Wirt. Prefixed to that volume is an engraved portrait of Mr. Henry, the history of which is somewhat curious. When the memoir was ready for the press, its author and his friends were anxious to procure a portrait, and made diligent though ineffectual search for one. None could then be discovered. The late John Randolph of Virginia, informed Mr. Wirt that the only known resemblance to Mr. Henry, was the head of Captain Cook, on Arrowsmith's map of the world. On this hint the publisher of the biography acted. The

skill of our townsman, Mr. Sully, was put in requisition, and by divesting the British sailor of his uniform coat, and adorning him with a cloak, wig, and spectacles, he was transformed into the rebel orator. The indefatigable proprietor of the National Portrait Gallery, our fellow citizen, Mr. Longacre, has since succeeded in finding an original miniature of Mr. Henry, and any one who will examine the latter will be forcibly struck with the contrast of the two portraits. Which is the more faithful I of course pretend not to say.

On the 24th of May, the House of Burgesses was in session. The news of the Port Bill arrived on that, or the day before. A resolution was introduced and adopted, fixing the first of June as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. The book of precedents, to which the Virginia "faithful subjects" had recourse, was one of evil omen to royal authority. "No example of such a solemnity," says Mr. Jefferson, "had existed since the days of our distresses in the war of '55, since which a new generation had grown up. With the help of Rushworth, whom we rummaged over for the revolutionary precedents and forms of the Puritans of those days, preserved by him, we cooked up a resolution, somewhat modernising the phrases, for appointing the first of June, on which the Port Bill was to commence, for a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, to implore Heaven to avert

from us the evils of civil war, and to inspire us with firmness in support of our rights, and to turn the hearts of the king and parliament to moderation and justice.”

May we not suppose, that among the thick coming fancies that floated through the minds of Henry and his associates, were more than one of separation—violent, bloody separation—and independence. What a picture for the hand of art to trace would be Patrick Henry, poring over the pages of Rushworth, and catching the spirit of Pym, of Vane and Hampden, from its illuminated record! The volume which told the tale of long endured wrong, and slow resentment; of a monarchy strongly guarded by the prejudices of the age, sustained by the hierarchy, the nobility, and the soldiery, trampling on popular rights and popular feelings. It told the tale of arbitrary taxation and its issue; narrated the rise, the progress, and the triumph of popular feeling thus defied—of a single individual starting from an humble sphere and wresting from the high hand of authority, the sceptre and the crown—it told of a Parliament sovereign in itself, and proud in its disregard of the dissolving and proroguing power of the throne—it told of the austere tribunal that brought to its bar successively all the oppressors of the people, the haughty and misguided Laud, the traitor Wentworth; and, finally, passed the stern decree that sent Charles Stuart to a bloody doom, which pity can

scarcely pronounce unmerited. This was the volume from which the patriots of Virginia learned their lessons of loyalty and submission.\*

As a matter of literary curiosity I have "rummaged" the volumes of Rushworth to discover the precedent which the Virginia patriots followed. On Monday, 7th of June, 1647, the following entry appears on the minutes of the Commons:

---

\* May I be permitted here to record, in better language than my own, a character of the Puritan patriots of the Commonwealth of 1640, to each word of which a republican student must subscribe. "At this time, Philosophy ceasing to be speculative, applied itself to public business; and sought, by seizing the helm of Government, to steer the ship of the Commonwealth in the direction most agreeable to the wishes of all wise and good men. The records of ancient and modern times were ransacked, in the hope of discovering hints for the improvement of society. Principles favourable to religious toleration were gradually established. Religion, greatly purified from the errors of the Roman church, began powerfully to influence the politics of the country, to operate a reform in manners, to raise and purify the character of its votaries. For the first time, perhaps, since the age of the apostles, Christianity was put in practice by high-minded disinterested men, who sought in earnest to lay the foundations of an evangelical Commonwealth, modelled in harmony with the precepts of the gospel, such as no other age or country ever yet aimed at. The Puritans, in fact, were genuine Christians, the most perfect, perhaps, that, with the failings inherent in human nature, we can ever expect to see on earth. They united with the sincerest piety and the fervent belief of all truth, a martial temper more stern and unbending than chivalry and knighthood ever inspired. Their courage was indomitable. Wise in council, adventurous and enthusiastic in the field, they were precisely the soldiers a great general would choose with which to subdue the world."—*Preliminary Discourse to the Prose Works of Milton*, by A. St. John.

“Some debate there was about a fast for the members of Parliament only: and accordingly it was ordered by the Commons that this House set apart next Wednesday for a day of humiliation. That God would be pleased to give them one heart and one mind in carrying on the great work of the Lord. And Mr. Marshal, Mr. Strong and Mr. Whitecar are appointed to pray and preach with them in their own House. The Lords likewise joined the Commons in observing the Fast.” On the 27th of July, 1647, a Proclamation of the Kirk of Scotland directing a General Fast was read in Parliament, one inducement to which is in form, “the phrases being somewhat modernised,” the same as that of Virginia.

“We are to entreat the Lord in the behalf of the King’s majesty, that he may be reconciled to God, and that he may be now furnished with wisdom and counsel from above, that he be not involved in new snares to the endangering of himself and these kingdoms; but that his heart may incline to such resolutions as will contribute for settling of religion and righteousness.” On the same page of Rushworth from which this extract is made will be found the following ominous minute: “Die Lunæ, 26 Julii, 1647. The House of Commons having adjourned till the morning, and Mr. Speaker risen out of his chair, and the members going out, divers petitioners



moved them to sit again, and the Speaker returning to his chair, and the members sitting in their places, the petitioners desire them to vote that the King's majesty should come to London; whereupon it was Resolved,

THAT HIS MAJESTY SHALL COME TO LONDON.\*

On the next day but one the Governor dissolved the House. On the following day eighty-nine members met at a room in the Apollo Tavern and signed a formal association, pledging themselves to resolute co-operation with the other Colonies, and recommending an immediate call of a General Congress. In one important particular this suggestion differed from the others. It contemplated Congress as a permanent body, and recommended that "Deputies should be appointed to meet in General Congress at such place *annually* as may be thought most convenient." On Sunday, the 29th, letters were received by express from Boston, Philadelphia and Annapolis, and immediately considered. Every thing, however, was ultimately referred to a general meeting, to be held at Williamsburg on the 1st of August.

Thus within little more than a fortnight from the date of the receipt of the Port Bill all the principal Colonies had bound themselves in this voluntary league, and were

---

\* Rushworth's Historical Collections, Part IV, Vol. I, pp. 546. 644.

pledged to the great measure of resistance—an Union and a Congress.

I should detain you too long were I to dwell on the interesting details of popular movement which filled the interval that elapsed from the period at which we have now arrived, to the month of September, when the Congress met. Every city—every county—every hamlet had its public meeting and voted its instructions to the Delegates to be elected. The soil was thoroughly volcanic, and the jets of flame which burst from every crevice showed what subterranean fires burned beneath. To two prominent expressions of sentiment shall I, for the sake of their peculiar interest, point your attention—pausing first merely to indicate the mode and periods of the election of the Delegates. The first election was made by Rhode Island on the 15th of June: her Delegates were Stephen Hopkins and Samuel Ward. The last was that of North Carolina, on the 24th of August. The Delegates from Rhode Island and Pennsylvania were elected by the Assemblies, acting regularly under their charters. Those from Massachusetts were elected by the House of Representatives, acting suddenly and with closed doors on the last day of its session. The record of that day is curious and characteristic. I cite it from a journal of the times.



“June 17, 1774. His Excellency the Governor having directed the Secretary to acquaint the two Houses that it was his pleasure that the General Assembly should be dissolved, and to declare the same dissolved accordingly, the Secretary went to the Court House, and finding the door of the Representative Chamber locked, directed the Messenger to go in and acquaint the Speaker that the Secretary had a message from His Excellency to the Honorable House, and desire he might be admitted to deliver it. The Messenger returned and said he had acquainted the Speaker therewith, who mentioned it to the House, *and their orders were, to keep the door fast.* Whereupon the Proclamation was published on the stairs leading to the Chamber, dissolving the Assembly.”

The Delegates from Virginia were elected by the members of a dissolved House, and all the other Delegates were chosen by the voluntary action of the different Colonies in Provincial Committees. In all except New York the whole Colony was represented. The city of New York and King's county were the only portions of that important province represented in the First Congress—and, according to the testimony of Mr. Galloway before the House of Commons, (assuming that to be worthy of credit,) the representative of King's county, Mr. Boerum, was elected at a meeting composed of two individuals, one of whom was the Delegate himself. On

the 6th July, 1774, every district of South Carolina except three, (Grenville, St. John's, Colleton county, and Christ Church Parish,) was represented in a voluntary convention in Charleston. A poll was opened and five Delegates were elected to represent the Colony to the General Congress. On Tuesday, August 2d, the Assembly of the Province met. Its action is thus described in a letter from the Governor to Lord Dartmouth.

“It having been expected that I should prorogue the General Assembly yesterday at the usual time, about ten or eleven o'clock, the Assembly privately and punctually met at eight o'clock in the morning” (on account, they say, of the excessive heat of the weather,) “and made an house, which was very uncommon. They had not been assembled five minutes before I was apprised of it. I immediately went to the Council Chamber in order to prorogue them, and waited a few minutes for one or two of the Council to be present. As soon as I sent for the Assembly they attended, and I prorogued them to the 6th of September; but their business having been ready prepared, in which they were all previously agreed, it required only a few minutes to pass through the forms of the House. They came to two Resolutions—one approving and confirming the election of the five persons chosen on the 6th of last month to assist at the Congress of the several Provinces; and the other, that they would

provide for the expense of their voyage. I returned to my own house in less than twenty minutes past eight. Your Lordship will see by this instance with what perseverance, secrecy and unanimity they form and conduct their designs—how obedient the body is to the head, and how faithful in their secrets.”

The Delegates from South Carolina were Henry Middleton, John Rutledge, Thomas Lynch, Christopher Gadsden and Edward Rutledge. At one of the preparatory meetings at which they were chosen Charles Cotesworth Pinckney presided. No one of the Colonies had better reason to be proud of its representatives than South Carolina. They had a rich reward: and three of the names I have enumerated, let me observe in passing, are associated with an incident probably new to you, but which has always seemed to me full of interest. In the Congress of 1774, John and Edward Rutledge first met George Washington as a fellow patriot or a fellow rebel, as the issue might be. In less than twenty years from that time George Washington was President of these United States, free and independent, and John and Edward Rutledge were two of his most tried and valued friends. They had stood side to side in common peril, in the council and in the field. When the Federal Government was organized, Washington selected the brothers for special honours. In 1789, John Rutledge was

appointed an Associate Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States. On his resignation two years afterwards the President addressed to Edward Rutledge and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney the following curious joint letter, for which I am indebted to Mr. Sparks' invaluable collection :

“COLUMBIA, S. C., *2d May*, 1791.

“GENTLEMEN,

“An address to you jointly on a subject of the following nature may have a singular appearance; but that singularity will not exceed the evidence which is thereby given of my opinion of and confidence in you, and of the opinion I entertain of your confidence and friendship for each other. The office lately resigned by Mr. John Rutledge in the Supreme Judiciary of the Union, remains to be filled. Will either of you two gentlemen accept it? And in that case, which of you?

Of my sincere esteem and regard for you both, I wish you to be persuaded, and that I am, gentlemen, &c.

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

In a joint answer the two friends declined the appointment, partly from private considerations and partly from a belief that they could better serve their country in the State Legislature of which they were members. Their reply thus concludes: “But as we devoted a large portion of our early years to the service of our country, so

whenever her honour or her interest shall seem to require our aid, we shall cheerfully lay aside all private or partial considerations, and imitate, so far as may be in our power, the best and brightest of examples." Musing on this beautiful incident, characteristic alike of him who gave and them who received the mark of confidence, may we not mourn over the contrast of the past and the present? I speak it not invidiously, but where is the executive patron now who can find two disinterested friends to be trusted thus—where, under the atmospheric influence that makes all, save very few indeed, seekers of offices and jobs, and fills every avenue to authority with scrambling assailants, rushing like the mob of Paris on the Swiss within—where shall we find two partizans who would refuse so high an honour for so high a reason?

On the 1st July, 1795, the President appointed John Rutledge Chief Justice of the United States on the resignation of Mr. Jay, also a member of the First Continental Congress. Rich indeed must have been the soil which produced such fruits.

I have said there were some important primary meetings among the thousand which were held throughout the provinces, worthy of attention. Among them was that at which Washington presided, in Fairfax county, Virginia, and which may be supposed to have spoken his sentiments and expectations at this crisis. He was a

member of the House of Burgesses at the time of its dissolution, and was a participant in the action of its refractory members when the news of the Port Bill arrived. The entry in his diary for the first of June shows how solemnly he regarded the issue and how thoroughly he was imbued with the spirit of the times. "*June 1st, Wednesday—Went to church and fasted all day.*" A few days afterwards he returned to Mount Vernon. The Fairfax county meeting was held on Monday, 18th of July. George Washington was Moderator and reported the resolutions, the authorship of which belongs, it is presumed, to George Mason, a copy in his writing being found in the Washington archives. Their style is clear and forcible, and they contain some views which, for their modes of expression and peculiar interest, cannot be passed by. They open with the strong assertion of the colonial communion of privilege with the mother country; declaring that this Colony and Dominion of Virginia cannot be considered as a conquered country; and if it be, its present inhabitants are the descendants, "not of the conquered, but of the conquerors." They recommend a Congress and commercial non intercourse; non-importation at once and non-exportation afterwards. The seventeenth Resolution, considering the source whence it came, is worthy of all attention, even at this day. It is in these emphatic words:



“Resolved, That it is the opinion of this meeting, that during our present difficulties and distress, no slaves ought to be imported into any of the British Colonies on this continent; and we take this opportunity of declaring our most earnest wishes to see an entire stop for ever put to such a wicked, cruel and unnatural trade.”

The discrimination made between the periods at which non-importation and non-exportation agreements were to be resorted to, rests on a basis of honour and sense of justice with which Washington and Virginia seem to have been strongly impressed. To Virginia, indeed, so far as I have been able to trace it, is due the praise of having first suggested this discrimination, and in Washington's private letters is the first illustration of its reason. The Colonies were of course a debtor country. Manufactures they may be said to have had none; and those products which are now our country's staples, and by means of which we hold the world in tribute, were then unknown. The commercial balance was thus always on one side. The habitual maintenance of the nation's faith is a Briton's proudest boast, and none but the brood of puny moralists and wretched partizans, whom later times have produced, ever pretended to distinguish between the political and commercial debt of a people so far as the nation's faith is involved. Deep and dark indeed must be the dishonour with which his-

tory will mark the character of that government or those public men who connect their policy with the selfish and wicked scheme of compelling its citizens to disregard the obligations which, in the aggregate, make a nation's commercial debt to foreigners. Even in the excitement of impending revolution our ancestors, burning with just indignation at oppression, did not lose sight of this hereditary obligation. They took the distinction at once between the right not to buy and the right not to pay for what they had bought already. In a letter to a near relative, dated two days after the Fairfax meeting, Washington thus speaks of its proceedings:

“As to the resolution of addressing the throne, I own to you, sir, I think the whole might as well have been expunged. I expect nothing from the measure, nor should my voice have sanctioned it, if the non-importation was intended to be retarded by it, for I am convinced as much as I am of my existence, that there is no relief for us, but in their distress; and I think, at least I hope, there is public virtue enough left among us to deny ourselves every thing but the bare necessities of life to accomplish this end. This we have a right to do, and no power upon earth can compel us to do otherwise, till it has first reduced us to the most abject state of slavery. The stopping of our exports to Great Britain would, no doubt,

be a shorter method than the other to effect this purpose, but if we owe money to Great Britain, nothing but the last necessity can justify the non-payment of it; and, therefore, I have great doubts upon this head, and wish the other method first tried, which is legal and will facilitate these payments."

In the instructions prepared at Williamsburgh, on the 1st of August, for the Delegates to Congress, the same idea was enforced, and the only restriction which was imposed, was one preventing immediate resort to non-exportation, originating, as the convention expressly stated, "in their earnest desire to make as quick and full payment as possible of their debts to Great Britain."\*

Between the date of these proceedings and the meeting of the Congress, the news of a new Parliamentary Statute reached this country and was made to add new fuel for the flame, which was ready to be lighted. I refer

\* In the Pennsylvania Gazette of 3d August, 1774, is the following notice copied from a Fredericksburg paper:

A CARD.—A Virginian presents his compliments to the Jockey Clubs of Fredericksburg and Portsmouth, and begs that they will suppress their sporting spirit till the circumstances of America can permit it with more decency. He also begs leave to recommend to the most serious consideration of these Clubs, whether their purses applied to the relief of the distressed Bostonians, would not afford them more real pleasure than all that can arise from viewing a painful contest between two or three animals.

to the Bill commonly known as the Quebec Bill, the effect of which in the Colonies was most remarkable. Looking at this statute with cool minds, and in a spirit of tolerable impartiality, it is difficult to find in it or about it the horrors with which excited imagination once painted it. It contained a provision restoring the French laws and modes of justice to the Province of Canada as best suited to the habits and manners of the population. But, beside this, it contained a provision for the maintenance of the privileges of the Catholic clergy, and the free exercise of the religion of the Church of Rome in Canada, subject to the king's supremacy. Its enactment was a measure of obvious policy if not necessity to the ministry. It was in legal phrase a bill *quia timet*, a measure to secure tranquillity in Canada, by whatever concessions, at a moment when the other Colonies were so thoroughly disturbed. The fear that prompted the concessions must now be conceded not to have been unreasonable. No sooner, however, was the Bill introduced into Parliament, than it was denounced by the Opposition as a measure designed to introduce absolute despotism and unmitigated Popery into a large part of the King's dominions, and bitter were the taunts, and violent the invectives that were hurled at the Bench of Bishops, and other High Church ministerial members, who with unusual tolerance and kindness to an ancient foe, sustained the

measure. Vain were the protestations of the Minister and his party, the clamour was loud and the excitement deep and pervading. With this opposition gloss and comment, the Quebec Bill reached America, and thus interpreted we may wonder that it did not produce a greater sensation among those whose religious feelings were so strong, and whose temperaments were so excitable and excited.

The religious sentiment which operated on the Revolution would be a theme of great interest—but it is one worthy of more minute examination than I have the means or time to bestow on it. I refer to it now merely as connected directly with my subject. When the Quebec Bill passed, little more than one hundred years had elapsed since the Puritan settlers of New England had fled from the religious persecution of a church identified closely in their imaginations with the Church of Rome. “Prelatist and Papist” were, in their estimation, convertible terms. Less than one hundred years had elapsed since a Roman Catholic monarch was driven from the British throne, and it was not quite thirty years since Protestant England had been invaded by an adventurer of the exiled family, sustained by the favour of the Vatican and the arms of France. The feelings of the Commonwealth of 1640, and of the Revolution of 1688, were strong in Puritan New England. They were strong in

Protestant America. Nor was the appeal to this sentiment without a powerful though temporary effect; and among the grievances which were subsequently complained of by Congress, the Quebec Bill, and the exposure of the Colonies to the contagion of Roman Catholic doctrines, were not forgotten. It was, however, a short lived and partial excitement, and its temporary character illustrates most strongly the destitution of the cause of the Revolution of the least tinge of sectarian feeling.

The cause of the patriots was not the cause of any sect, and thoroughly as the principles of Puritanism were interwoven with popular sentiment in one portion of the country, when that sentiment was mingled in communion with that of others, sectarianism and religious exclusiveness were found to be irreconcilable with the high and more catholic sympathy which bound the Congress and its varied constituency together. The last impotent attempt to revive this feeling was made by some of the loyalists, who endeavoured, with a fierceness that only tended to defeat their design, to represent the cause of the Colonies as that of a few troublesome schismatics, whose end and aim were to restore in these remote regions the empire of sour intolerance and persecution. In a pamphlet published by a clergyman of the Church of England at New York, in 1774, a fierce admonition against dissent thus concludes: "In a word, no order or



denomination amongst us would enjoy liberty or safety, if subjected to the fiery genius of a New England Republican Government, the little finger of which we should experience to be heavier than the loins of Parliament. *This* has sometimes chastised us with whips when we deserved punishment, but *that* would torment us with scorpions whether we deserved it or not.” Mr. Galloway, a loyal partizan of higher credit, described the patriots of 1774 as an “united faction of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and *Smugglers*,” and deduces the issue of revolt and revolution mainly from the action of the Presbyterian Clergy and Laity as early as 1764, when the proposition of a general synod emanated from a Committee appointed for that purpose in Philadelphia.

A gentleman in New York, on the 31st May, 1774, thus wrote to a friend in London—

“You will have discovered that I am no friend to Presbyterians, and that I fix all the blame of these extraordinary American proceedings upon them. You would perhaps think it proper to ask whether no Church of England people were among them. Yes, there were, to their eternal shame be it spoken, but in general they were interested in the motion, either as smugglers of tea or as being overburdened with dry goods they knew not how to pay for, and would therefore have been glad to have a non-importation agreement, or a resolution to pay

no debts to England. But, sir, these are few in number. Believe me the Presbyterians have been the chief and principal instruments in all these flaming measures, and they always do and ever will act against Government, from that restless and turbulent anti-monarchical spirit which has always distinguished them everywhere when they had, or by any means could assume power, however illegally. It is an indubitable fact, that previous to and during all these acts of violence committed in the Colonies, especially to the Eastward, the Presbyterian pulpits groaned with the most wicked, malicious, and inflammatory harangues, pronounced by the favourite orators among that sect, spiriting their godly hearers to the most violent opposition to Government; persuading them that the intention of Government was to rule them with a rod of iron, and to make them all slaves; and assuring them that if they would rise as one man to oppose those arbitrary schemes, God would assist them to sweep away every ministerial tool (the amiable name these wretches are pleased to bestow on the professors of the Church,) from the face of the earth; that now was the time to strike, whilst Government at home was afraid of them; together with a long string of such seditious stuff well calculated to impose on the poor devils their hearers, and make them rush into every kind of extravagance and

folly, which if I foresee aright, they will have leisure enough to be sorry for."

Thus spoke the bigot loyalist—but the demon of intolerance was invoked in vain on this side of the Atlantic, and it is a glorious comment on such strains of persecution that no response was made. All that the invocation gained was the acquiescence of zealots in England, and the stigma which it fixed on the Establishment in Great Britain, in its sanction subsequently given through a majority of the Bishops in Parliament, to the employment of Hessian and Indian mercenaries to desolate the homes of their American Brethren. *Here*, I repeat, the exorcism failed. How it failed scarcely needs illustration.

In an original manuscript letter in my possession, a Philadelphia gentleman writes to a friend at a distance: "The Virginia Delegates to the Congress have arrived in town—they are a fine set of fellows—even the *New England men are milksops to them.*" Yet every one of these Virginia Delegates was an Episcopalian, attached from habit, education and reflection, to its institutions, its liturgy, and its theories of discipline and doctrine. On the 9th September, 1774, Samuel Adams writes to Dr. Warren: "After settling the mode of voting, which is by giving each colony an equal voice, it was agreed to open the business with prayer. As many of our warmest friends are members of the Church of England, I thought

it prudent, as well on that as some other accounts, to move that the service should be performed by a clergyman of that denomination. Accordingly *the lessons of the day and prayers were read* by the Rev. Doctor Duché, who afterwards made a most excellent extemporary prayer, by which he discovered himself to be a gentleman of sense and piety, and a warm advocate for the religious and civil rights of America."

The history of this eminent divine is well known to you. The opening prayer, for steadiness in resistance and fidelity to the cause of an injured people, was heard, but not for him, and the blessing which the minister of the Gospel invoked for the rebel Congress, descended richly on those for whom he prayed. It was a blessing, which, like that of the Moabite prophet, could not be reversed. In less than three years, the first Chaplain of Congress abandoned the cause of Liberty, and was succeeded in his trust by one whose fidelity never faltered. This venerable man we all remember. His praise I mean not here to pronounce, further than to say that no one of his high attributes was more worthy of admiration than his strict sense of the duties which are due from the citizen to the state. Those duties he steadily but inoffensively performed; giving to the clergy of his beloved country, of all denominations, an example too rarely imitated, and illustrating by contrast with his conduct

the inefficacy of those cloistered virtues which seem in the effeminate judgment of many to constitute the perfection of clerical character. I have before me, through the kindness of a member of his family, his narration of those times of trial, from which I may, without indelicacy, and in the assurance that it will be deeply interesting to all who hear me, extract a single passage. It embodies the opinion of an American Christian, a Whig of the Revolution.

“You know my construction of the scriptural precepts on the subject of obedience to civil rulers. It engaged my most serious consideration, and under the sense of my responsibility to God, I am still of opinion that they respect the ordinary administration of men in power who are not to be resisted from private regards, or for the seeking of changes however promising in theory. In a mixed Government the constitutional rights of any one branch are as much the ordinances of God as those of any other. To talk of hereditary right, when the question is of the sense of the scriptural precepts, is beside the mark, for they look no further than to the present possessor of the power. The contrary theory lands us in despotism, and if any should be reconciled to this by the notion of its securing of tranquillity there cannot be a greater mistake. Although possessed of these sentiments I never beat the ecclesiastical drum. When my coun-

trymen in general had chosen the dreadful measure of forcible resistance, for certainly the spirit was almost universal at the time of arming, it was the dictate of conscience to take what seemed the right side. I continued, as did all of us, to pray for the king, *until Sunday (inclusively) before the Fourth of July, 1776*. Within a short time after, I took the oath of allegiance to the United States, and have since remained faithful to it. My intentions were upright and most seriously weighed. I hope they were not in contrariety to my duty.”\*

In his published memoirs of the church, he thus modestly records the singularity of his position at this juncture:

“Owing to the circumstance of many able and worthy ministers cherishing their allegiance to the king of Great Britain, and entertaining conscientious scruples against the use of the liturgy, with the omission of the appointed prayers for him, they ceased to officiate, and the doors of the far greater number of the Episcopal churches were closed for years. In this State there was a part of that time in which there was, through the whole extent, but one resident minister of the church in question: *He who records the fact.*” On the Fourth of July, 1776, there is an entry made in the minutes of Christ Church and St.

---

\* MS. letter to Bishop Hobart, Sep. 1, 1819.



Peters, which is worthy of notice here. It is in these words:

“ At a meeting of the vestry at the Rector’s, July 4, 1776.

Present, Rev. Jacob Duché, Rector.

Thomas Cuthbert, church warden; Jacob Duché, Robert Whyte, Charles Stedman, Edmund Physick, James Biddle, Peter Dehaven, James Reynolds, Gerardus Clarkson, vestrymen.

Whereas the Honourable Continental Congress have resolved to declare the American Colonies to be free and independent states; in consequence of which it will be proper to omit those petitions in the Liturgy wherein the king of Great Britain is prayed for, as inconsistent with the said declaration—Therefore, Resolved, that it appears to this vestry to be necessary for the peace and well-being of the churches to omit the said petitions; and the rector and assistant ministers of the united churches are requested in the name of the vestry and their constituents to omit such petitions as are above mentioned.”\*

Thus peculiarly unjust to the American Episcopal Church would be any inference drawn from the ravings

---

\* I am indebted for this extract to the present Rector, Dr. Dorr, whose interesting historical account of Christ Church is now in course of publication. It would seem that the action of the vestry preceded the public Declaration of Independence.

of maddened zealots, of wholesale infidelity to the cause of the Revolution; while on the other hand, the sweeping asseveration that dissent and disloyalty were necessarily convertible, is alike unfounded. In a Pastoral letter from the Presbyterian Synod of New York and Philadelphia, to the congregations under their care, read from the pulpits on Thursday, June 29th, 1775, the day of the General Fast, and after the battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill, this emphatic language is used. Its author was Doctor Witherspoon.

“In carrying on this important struggle let every opportunity be taken to express your attachment and respect to our sovereign King George, and to the revolution principles by which his august family was seated on the throne. We recommend, indeed, not only allegiance to him from duty and principle as the first magistrate of the empire, but esteem and reverence for the person of the prince who has merited well of his subjects on many accounts, and who has probably been misled into the late and present measures by those about him; neither have we any doubt that they themselves have been in a great degree deceived by false information from interested persons residing in America. It gives us great pleasure to say from our own certain knowledge of all belonging to our communion, and from the best means of information of the far greatest part of all de-

nominations in this country, that the present opposition to the measures of administration does not in the least arise from disaffection to the King or a desire of separation from the parent state. \* \* \* \* We exhort you, therefore, to continue in the same disposition, and not to suffer oppression or injury itself easily to provoke to any thing which may seem to betray contrary sentiments: let it ever appear that you only desire the preservation and security of those rights which belong to you as freemen and Britons, and that reconciliation upon these terms is your most ardent desire.”\*

Such a letter from the pen of such a man, while it shows how little mere sectarianism mingled in the conflict, detracts nothing from the praise due to the body of the Presbyterian Clergy and Laity for their single hearted support of the cause of liberty in the Colonies. A Presbyterian loyalist was a thing unheard of. Patriotic clergymen of the Established Church were exceptions to general conduct, for while they were patriots at a sacrifice and in spite of restraints and imaginary obligations which many found it impossible to disregard, it was natural sympathy and voluntary action that placed the Dissenters under the banner of revolutionary redress. It is a sober judgment which cannot be questioned, that

---

\* Witherspoon's Works, Vol. III, p. 602.

had independence and its maintenance depended on the approval and ready sanction of the colonial Episcopal clergy, misrule and oppression must have become far more intense before they would have seen a case of justifiable rebellion. The debt of gratitude which independent America owes to the Dissenting Clergy and Laity never can be paid. Still, mere sectarianism was inoperative to sow discord or disunite friends.

Nor was the destitution of sectarian feeling—the abandonment of minor adverse sentiment confined to Protestant denominations. No sooner had the excitement produced by the Quebec Bill and the gloss it was made to bear subsided, than the feeling which had incidentally been aroused against the Roman Catholics disappeared likewise. During the session of the Congress of 1774, General Washington, as appears from his diary, attended mass in the old Roman Catholic Church in this city;\* and as early as 1775, John Carroll and his kinsman Charles, both Roman Catholics, and one a Jesuit from St. Omers, were selected by Congress for a public mission to Canada, which they executed with promptitude and fidelity, and continued from the beginning to the end of the war as true, as ardent and consistent patriots as our infant country knew.

---

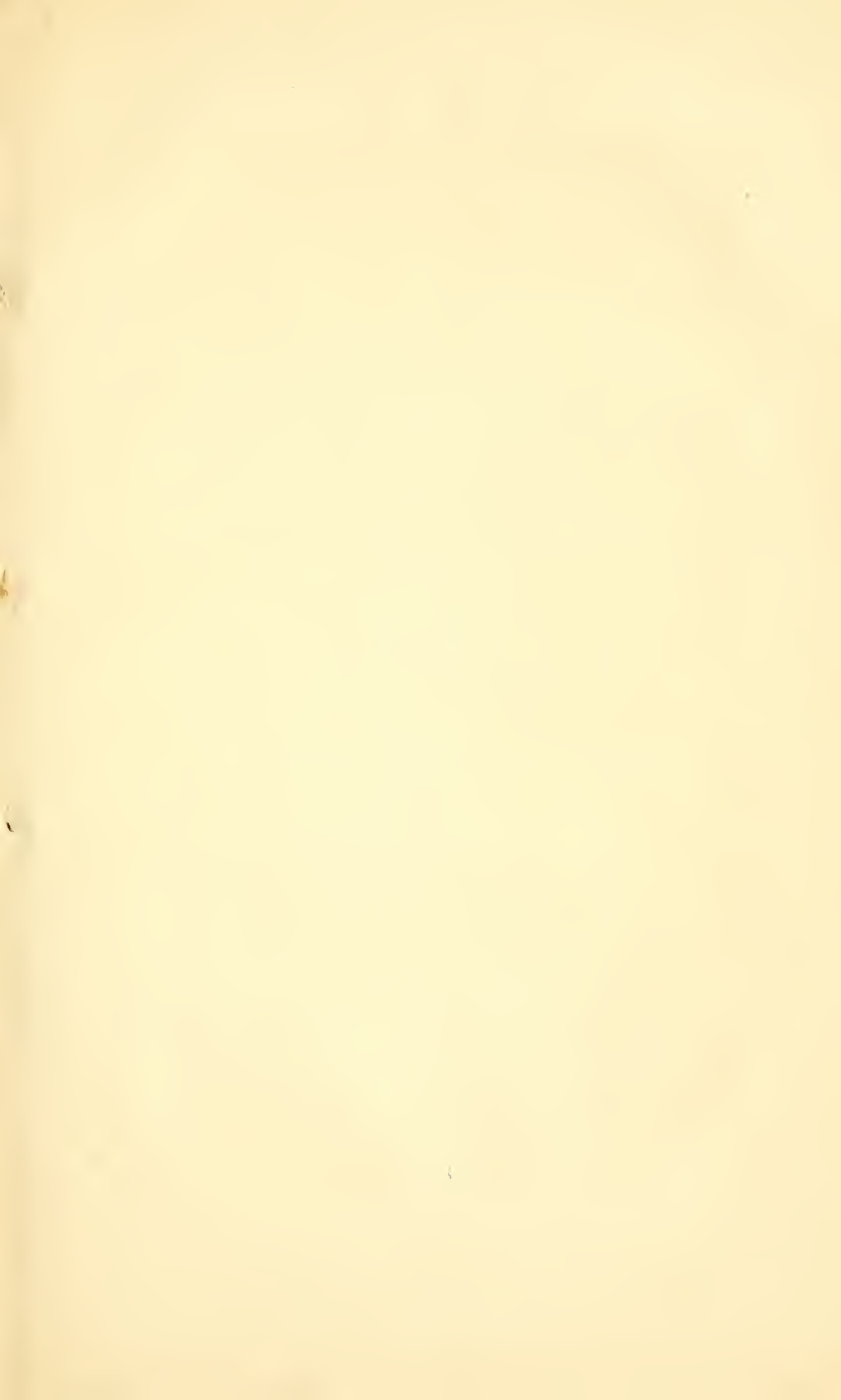
\* Sparks's Washington, Vol. II, p. 504.

So may, so must it always be with us. Whatever contests arise—whatever diversities of opinion and action occur in this land of toleration, never let us forget the lesson which the birth of the Revolution teaches, the example which it gives. Sectarian animosity and intolerance, the reproach of true religion, as they never can have permanent influence, should have no abiding place here. The clergy of all denominations was then a brotherhood of peace—the pulpit was the source of peaceful and harmonizing influences. So let them always be. Let it never be forgotten that when the multitude of the oppressed were summoned to the great work of the Revolution, the call was to all alike—Protestant and Catholic, Churchman and Dissenter were called and came together: the Nation's Fast and the Nation's Festival were for all alike.

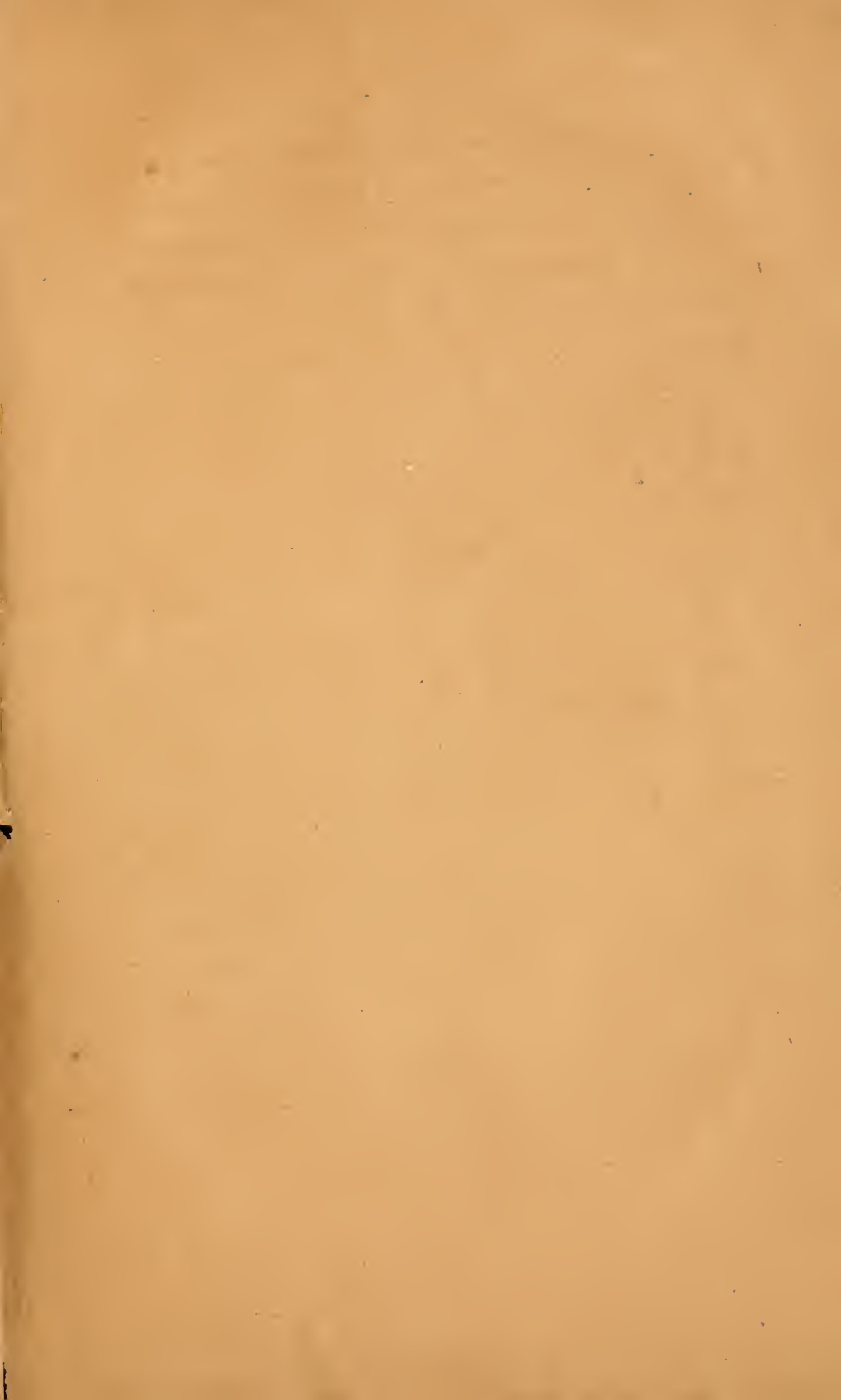
On the fifth of September the Congress met—and here, gentlemen, the fear of having too long occupied you admonishes me to pause, leaving to other and abler hands to trace anew the record of its glorious acts. It too is a topic worthy careful illustration. It is a volume of deeper interest than the meagre preface I have attempted would indicate. When you study it, as I hope you will, carefully and philosophically as part and portion of our Revolutionary annals, be assured that if you have no other recompense you will be repaid by the sense of

invigorated patriotism which it gives. From those annals only will you learn that loyalty is a citizen's as well as a subject's virtue, and be made to feel how rich is his privilege who learns to love exclusively his country's institutions.









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 782 171 7

